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Small-Scale Agriculture Today

Office for Small-Scale Agriculture



Spring 1990

U.S. Department of Agriculture - Cooperative State Research Service - Agricultural Research For A Better Tomorrow

AT ISSUE...BEES

We know that bees are good because they pollinate crops. There are over 20,000 kinds of bees worldwide, including honeybees and bumblebees. Many bees do not look or act like honeybees, and these may be mistaken for wasps, flies or gnats. Most kinds of bees have neither queens nor workers, do not live in hives, and do not make honey or wax. We may need to depend more on these alternative pollinators because our honeybees are in trouble.

The beekeeping business faces three major new challenges: African honeybees, Varroa mites and tracheal mites. All are exotic pests, brought here by people. The two kinds of parasitic mites came recently to the United States by accident from Europe and Asia. They weaken honeybees, making them less productive and less able to survive the winter. Several control methods are being developed.

African honeybees were intentionally brought to Brazil in 1956 by a scientist. Since then they have multiplied phenomenally and have spread throughout Latin America. They are just 150 miles south of Brownsville, Texas, and are expected to enter the United States this year. They are pests because they sting readily, abscond, and rob other bees, which they resemble. They are dangerous, and difficult and costly to manage. Thus many small-scale or hobbyist beekeepers have been forced out of business. Wild swarms will probably occupy a variety of habitats in the Southern States (horticultural zone 7 or warmer), and there is no effective control. We will have to learn to live with them, much as we put up with yellow jackets and hornets. At least, the wild African colonies will benefit us by some pollinating activity.

Due to the troubles with honeybees, interest in managing various alternative pollinating bee species has been increasing. Since the 1950's, two species have been commercially managed to pollinate the specialized flowers of alfalfa, and two other species have been managed successfully to pollinate apple and almond trees. There is much interest in using alternative pollinators for greenhouse crops because honeybees do poorly in such confinement. Much more research is needed.

In order to be sure that there are plenty of natural wild, unmanaged pollinators, it is necessary to protect them from pesticides. They also need nest habitat such as permanently fallow areas with dry, bare, sunny soil and brushy, weedy areas. Practices that are good for wildlife and Integrated Pest Management will also encourage pollinators. Since most pollinators have a flight range of less than 100 yards, it would be most beneficial to disperse the fallow areas among cultivated crop lands.

BEVY OF BEE EXPERTS

Dr. David Fletcher (Honeybees)
Biology Department
Bucknell University
Lewisburg, PA 17837
telephone 717-524-1200

Dr. Orley R. Taylor (Honeybees)
Department of Entomology
University of Kansas
Lawrence, KS 66045
telephone 913-864-4051

Dr. Suzanne Batra (Other bees)
USDA-ARS
Beneficial Insects Laboratory
Beltsville, MD 20705
telephone 301-344-2384

TOPICS AND TECHNOLOGY

Tracheal mites - Faster evaporation of menthol to kill tracheal mites, a major parasite of honeybees, now appears possible by mixing the chemical with vegetable shortening and spreading it on cardboard sheets. Contact: William T. Wilson, USDA-ARS, Honeybee Research Unit, Subtropical Agricultural Research Laboratory, P.O. Box 267, Weslaco, TX 78796; telephone 512-968-3159.

Miles & Millions - A bee flies more than 55,000 miles and visits two million flowers to produce a single pound of honey. (The Delmarva Farmer, September 19, 1989, p. 1)

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ENTOMOLOGICAL RECORDS
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The Crofter - Published bimonthly, one year costs \$18.00, two years \$34.00. Contact: Jerry Chouinard, The Croft Institute, Rt. 3 Box 73, Stanley, WI 54768; telephone 715-644-2499.

Free - The 1990 catalog "Mushroompeople" for shiitake mushroom growers and enthusiasts is now available. Contact: Jennifer Snyder, P.O. Box 159, Inverness, CA 94937; telephone 415-663-8504.

South - "Capsules" is published periodically and distributed free by the Southern Rural Development Center (SRDC) as an information service for educators, researchers, local officials and private citizens interested in improving the quality of life in the small communities and rural areas of the South. Contact: Doss Brodnax, Director, SRDC, P.O. Box 5446, Mississippi State, MS 39762; telephone 601-325-3207.

The Report - "Changing America: The New Face of Science and Engineering" is available free from the Task Force on Women, Minorities and the Handicapped in Science and Technology. Contact: Sue Kemnitzer, 1800 G Street, N.W., Room 1228, Washington, D.C. 20550; telephone 202-357-9834.

Garlic - Garlic Seed Foundation ("The Garlic Press," subscription \$8/year) is a casual association of New York garlic growers and garlic consumers. Contact: David Stern, Rose Valley Farm, Rose, NY 4542-0149; telephone 315-587-9787.

Dandelions - "On the Trail of the Yellow Flowers & Earth Nail (A Dandelion Sampler)" is a very important book for anyone interested in wild herbs, natural food and the potential of dandelions as an alternative crop. The 77-page book costs \$9.45. Contact: Peter Gail, Goosefoot Acres Press, P.O. Box 18016, Cleveland Heights, OH 44118; telephone 216-932-2145.

Chemigation Safety - Washington State is implementing regulations which are modeled after those implemented by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) in the Label Improvement Program for all pesticides registered under FIFRA. For further information contact: Thomas W. Ley, Extension Irrigation Engineer, Washington State University, Route 2 Box 2953A, Prosser, WA 99350; telephone 509-786-2226.

Early Bird - Get free information on how to start cold-sensitive vine crops (tomatoes, peppers, melons, cukes, squashes and eggplants) outdoors two months early and begin harvesting five to six weeks early. Contact: Gary Corkins, Terra Copia, Inc., 950 W 2950 S, Salt Lake City, UT 84119; telephone 801-972-1770, Fax 801-972-1805.

Good Reading - "The Herb Companion", published bimonthly, explores and celebrates the history, culture and application of the useful plants. Costs \$21.00 for a one-year subscription. Contact: Donna Melton, 306 North

Washington Avenue, Loveland, CO 80537; telephone 303-669-7672.

Women - The Woman's National Farm and Garden Association, Inc., was founded in 1914 for the purpose of promoting agricultural and horticultural interests among women. Organized by divisions from Maine to California, membership is some 5,000. For more information contact: Marty Nolan, 2230 Quail Lake Road, Findlay, OH 45840; telephone 419-422-2466.

Dairy Feeding Systems - (NRAES-38) 278-page book, contains 30 papers that address ways to improve farm profitability through improved feeding systems and strategies. Costs \$20.00 to get a copy, check payable to NRAES. Contact: Northeast Regional Agriculture Engineering Service, 152 Riley-Robb Hall, Cooperative Extension, Ithaca, NY 14853; telephone 607-255-7654.

How Much? - "In 1973 only 21 percent of the U.S. food dollar was spent for food prepared outside the home. In 1987 41 percent went to prepared and restaurant foods. By the year 2000 that figure will rise to 90 percent...Gaetan Lussier." (The Produce News, February 17, 1990, p. 4)

TIP - Plants often outgrow their soil. Most plants need repotting every two years; some every six months.

Biological Control - *Bacillus thuringiensis* is fatal to a wide range of leaf-eating caterpillars previously controlled with chemicals. This completely non-toxic bacteria is used against cabbage worms and gypsy moth larvae and provides a safe, positive alternative control method.

Canada - Proceedings of the IDEAS 1990 Conference, January 1990, are in print. Cost is U.S. \$18.00. Contact: Linda Balmer, Ridgetown College of Agriculture Technology, Ridgetown, Ontario, Canada NOP2CO; telephone 519-674-5456.

KEEP - The Garden Book for Spring 1990 is much more than a catalogue, it is a to-be-kept publication--full of garden and nursery information. Costs \$5.00 per year. Contact: Mark Tunkel, White Flower Farm, Litchfield 00011, CT 06759; telephone 203-496-9624.

JOY - Propagating, cultivating, harvesting, and decorating: The Joy of Herbs is published four times each year and the cost is \$16.00; single copies \$5.75. Contact: Barbara C. Sanders, P.O. Box 530317, Birmingham, AL 35253-0317; telephone 205-933-1804.

Goats - "The U.S. Forest Service will try using goats instead of herbicides to control vegetation in the Ouachita National Forest." The concept is a project of the Arkansas Jessieville Ranger District. (The Washington Times, December 19, 1989, p. 88)

NEEDED - topics, technologies, and calendar of events (yours) to the Office for Small-Scale Agriculture (OSSA); telephone 202-447-3640. Dialcom-AGS3037 H. Kerr or Fax 202-475-3179.

Nunas - These beans pronounced "noon-yahs" are currently grown at high elevations in the Andes Mountains and are not available in the United States, yet. However, the bean could become a snack food (they burst and expand when rapidly heated) if the beans can be grown at lower elevations and will pop i.e., "popbeans." Contact: Stephen C. Spaeth, USDA-ARS, Grain Legume Genetics and Physiology Branch, Room 215, Johnson Hall, Washington State University, Pullman, WA 99164-6421; telephone 509-335-9521.

Biocontrol Weapon - Mushroom flies are bothersome; however, the mushroom industry has a new control method. Adding steinernematid nematodes, which are natural predators of flies, to mushroom growing medium can control the fly populations. Contact: William R. Nickle, USDA-ARS Nematology Laboratory, Beltsville Agricultural Center, Beltsville, MD 20705; telephone 301-344-3064.

Range Chicken - "In a reversal, the U.S. Department of Agriculture told California poultry producer Bart Ehman that he can sell his product under the name "Rocky The Range Chicken." Earlier this year the government told the company it couldn't use the word "range in its labeling." (The Wall Street Journal, February 28, 1990, p. 11A)

Stewardship Week - "Citizens of all creation" is the theme of this year's 36th Annual Soil and Water Stewardship Week set for April 29 - May 7. A sample packet of celebration materials can be ordered for \$2.00. Contact: Sally Francis, The National Association of Conservation (NACJD), Service Dept., 408 E. Main, P.O. Box 855, League City, TX 77574-0855; telephone 713-332-3402.

Good Idea - In Montana, the Alternative Energy Resources Organization (AERO) offers small grants to (Montana only) local producer groups to organize on-farm research or demonstration projects to address the long-term sustainability of their operations. What about your State? Contact: AERO, 44 N. Last Chance Gulch, Helena, MT 59601; telephone 406-443-7272.

NEW TAX RULE

A new tax rule recently signed into law may catch some farmers and agricultural workers unaware. BE AWARE! Beginning January 1, 1990, agricultural workers who are subject to Social Security withholding also must have their federal income taxes withheld by their employer.

Claude Dorminey, farm records specialist with the University of Georgia, Extension Service, said, "If an individual farmer pays a farm employee at least \$150 a year in cash wages or pays more than \$2,500 a year to all

employees, then the workers are subject to federal income tax withholding in addition to Social Security withholding."

Dorminey suggests the following ways for farmers to get information on what they must do to meet the new requirements:

- o IRS Circular A, which applies to agricultural workers,
- o IRS Circular E, which has information on Social Security and federal income tax withholding,
- o Consult with your area IRS office.
- o Telephone the IRS information number, 1-800-424-1040.

VIDEO LIBRARY

In a joint effort, the Cooperative Extension Programs of Georgia's Fort Valley State College and North Carolina A&T State University have produced a video library, "Ways To Grow, Money-Making Ideas For Small Farmers." This series of 8 VHS videos is designed to introduce small-scale, limited-resource farmers to alternative enterprises for their farms. A realistic view and enough information is provided for the viewer to decide whether or not this is something he or she would like to pursue.

Each production begins with an overview of what the enterprise entails and the marketing outlook. Farmers and specialists offer tips on management, production skills, marketing strategies and the advantages versus the challenges. There is also a brief description of the resources needed as well as labor requirements. Each tape ends with the name and address of a specialist to contact for more information.

Videos cost \$10 each and are available from two sources. They are the following:

Commercial Rabbit Production, 10:30 minutes
Growing Landscape Ornamentals, 14:50 minutes
Growing Shiitake Mushrooms, 13:18 minutes
Woodlot Management, 14:35 minutes

Make your check payable to North Carolina A&T University CEP. Contact: Valorie F. McAlpin, Director, Extension/Research Communications, North Carolina A&T University, P.O. Box 21928, Greensboro, NC 27420; telephone 919-334-7047.

Meat Goat Production, 11:15 minutes
Commercial Catfish Production, 13:35 minutes
Commercial Vegetable Production, 12:40 minutes
Growing Forage Crops, 14:55 minutes

Make your check payable to Fort Valley State College CEP. Contact: John M. Bentley, Head, Extension Communications, Fort Valley State College, P.O. Box 4061, Fort Valley, GA 31030-3298; telephone 912-825-6345.

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

April 15-21, 1990 - Earth Week. Recycle, write your government leaders, work within your communities, join an environmental group, plant trees, carpool and GET INVOLVED. YOU can make a difference.

April 20-22, 1990 - Shepherd's Extravaganza, sponsored by Western Washington Sheep and Fleece Shows, Inc., at the Puyallup Spring Fair, Puyallup, WA. Contact: Lin Schwider, 21420 204th Ave. SE, Maple Valley, WA 98038; telephone 206-432-3455.

May 11-13, 1990 - Escondido Avocado Festival. City of Escondido, CA. Contact: Paul Seeley, P.O. Box 263109, Escondido, CA 92026; telephone 619-741-7082.

May 26, 1990 - Fourth Annual Baltimore Herb Festival will be held from 10 am to 6 pm, in Leakin Park just off the Baltimore Beltway. Contact: Marylou Wolf, 2301 Pickwick Rd., Baltimore, MD 21207; telephone 301-448-0406.

June 2-3, 1990 - Herb Fest (the second largest in the nation.) FREE, 10 am - 5 pm daily, rain or shine. Contact: Dan Salzler, Herb Hollow, East Otto, NY 14729; telephone 716-257-5105.

June 4-11, 1990 - Second International Wildlife Ranching Symposium, Edmonton, Alberta, Canada. Contact: Susan Shandruk, Exe. Dir., 52080 Rge Rd. 224, Sherwood Park,

Alberta T8C 1B7; telephone 403-922-4250, Fax 403-922-4250.

June 9, 1990 - Pennsylvania Rabbit Conference, Montgomery County 4-H Center, Skipjack, PA. Contact: Nancy Kadwill, Penn State Extension, 1015 Rt. 113 P.O. Box 20, Creamery, PA 19430; telephone 215-489-4315.

June 30 - July 3, 1990 - HERBS 90. Int'l Herb Growers and Marketing Assoc. 5th Annual Conference, Omni Hotel, Baltimore, MD. Contact: Maureen Buehrle, Exec. Dir., P.O. Box 281, Silver Springs, PA 17575; telephone 717-285-4252.

August 23-25, 1990 - Fourth National Amaranth Symposium; Minneapolis/St. Paul Airport Hilton Hotel. Contact: Nancy Breneman, 405 Coffey Hall, University of Minnesota, St. Paul, MN 55108, telephone 612-625-2722.

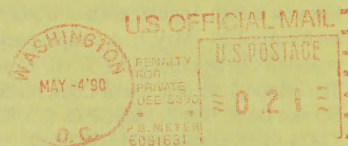
October 22-26, 1990 - International Symposium on Goat Production. Florida A&M University, Tallahassee, FL. Contact: Claude McGowas, Room 202 Perry Paige Building, Florida A&M University, Tallahassee, FL 32307; telephone 904-599-3546.

(Mention of commercial enterprises or brand names does not constitute endorsement or imply preference by the U.S. Department of Agriculture.)

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